

A Night of Tradition: Gala fashion show by Friendship Colours of the Chars

In a fast-paced, materialistic era as such, taking it slow may in fact be better for the world. With this philosophy at its core, Friendship Colours of the Chars celebrated "A Night of Tradition" that magnificently interweaved tradition and fashion on Friday, November 26, at Le Meridien, Dhaka.

Star Lifestyle was one of the media partners of the event.

Friendship Colours of the Chars is a social enterprise of Friendship NGO that works with marginalized women residing in the remotest areas of Bangladesh within the riverine islands. By providing them with vocational training to master the art of handloom, natural dying, block printing, and embroidery, they are empowered to live life with dignity while preserving the culture and tradition of our country, all in an effort to promote slow and sustainable fashion.

A Night of Tradition began with opening



remarks from Nazra Mahjabeen Sabet, Director of Operations, Nodi Limited, who stated, "We all have a common goal of making our world a better place with better systems. Friendship Colours of the Chars is the first slow and sustainable fashion brand in Bangladesh formed to promote slow fashion in a fast-moving world, while respecting the history and heritage of old Bengal."

Runa Khan, Founder and Executive Director of Friendship NGO, added, "The poor cannot afford poor solutions. They need to identify with something beautiful to find the courage to face challenges life throws at them and live with dignity. Our focus remained on providing these people with access to health, education, and income and eventually, Friendship Colours of the Chars was born."

Providing a synopsis of the life of a weaver, the first performance was a poetry recitation synchronised with a performance depicting rural life. The minimalistic garments featured in soothing shades of white perfectly drew the image of the simple and ordinary lives of people living in remote regions of Bangladesh – peaceful and tranquil with no hustle and bustle.

The fashion walks emphasised on six broad categories, the first of which was the most traditional of human power tools – handloom. Following eco-friendly procedures, all fabric is a product of this traditional technique combined with manual dexterity and skills of the weavers.

Each roll of yarn not only weaves wearable clothing but also the stories of the women



behind their making. The simplicity of the attires in pale colours was indeed a reflection of the purity and modesty that lies behind their creation.

The second fashion line represented the finest handmade creation of Bangladeshi tradition – Jamdani. The articles of clothing donned in the runway not only captured the regal features of Jamdani but also encapsulated decades of rich history. They



are made from the purest of cotton replete with a mix of complex patterns consisting of geometric, plant, and floral motifs.

Friendship Colours of the Chars tailors

not just traditional saris handed down to us from the past but also modern ready wear for the present, which was the theme for the next fashion walk. As the models strutted down the runway in attires that are up-to-the-minute chic yet made using traditional methods, popular singer Mehreen Mahmud added fervour to the event with her energetic performance.

Also present in the event was Afsana Mimi, actress and director of Shilpakala Academy who graciously emphasised on the value of love, respect, and pride that is involved in the making of these articles of clothing, jewellery, and accessories.

Pure Bengal silk is a reflection of the silky rivers flowing throughout our country and the next fashion line paid tribute to this fabric. Adorning unique designs, wax prints, block prints, patterns, and embroidery, it demonstrated a sublime blend of slow



fashion and contemporary style entwined with sheer elegance.

Following this, the aura of the event turned cool as it focused on one colour of the rainbow – indigo. Indigo dyeing is one of the purest forms of natural dye and is etched in our history that dates centuries back. The mix and match of outfits that ranged from traditional to modern not only represented slow fashion, but history wrapped in blue hues.

Friendship Colours of the Chars is spreading its reach across the globe to Europe, representing the infusion of Bangladeshi heritage and slow fashion in foreign lands. Their store in Luxembourg is the flagship retail outlet that adapts to trending global styles, where the shopping space reflects our culture.

Marc Elvinger, Co-Chair of Friendship International regarded it "as the most beautiful shop in town" accentuating the fine collection of popping colours and quality attires. The last performance of the evening provided a synopsis of modish attires that are exported to Europe, straight from the chars.

The show ended with the gracious presence of Imam Hassan, the Lead Designer behind the attires for the evening and concluding remarks from esteemed Fashion Designer Chandra Shekhar Saha, who noted, "Fashion is dynamic, that is altering with dignity, colour, perception, creativity, ideas, and innovation. But slow fashion pulls us back to reality and reminds us that we are in fact very close to nature."

A Night of Tradition was a celebration of our pride and heritage along with the rise of slow fashion in Bangladesh. It brought under limelight the work of unsung heroes, the women of the chars who use these skills to stitch their own passion and compassion into beautiful hand-woven fabric, defining what it means by slow and sustainable fashion in its rawest form.

By Fariha Amber
Photo: Friendship Colours of the Chars